

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

DECEMBER 1940

DOCUMENTARY—THE CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF REALITY

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D.N.L. No. 12

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER—launched three months after the outbreak of war—has reached the end of its first volume, and we should like to thank our subscribers for their steady and generous support. No matter what may come, we shall attempt to publish D.N.L. in 1941, and to preserve our independent and critical standards. Our circulation has risen steadily through the blitz, and to-day we have subscribers in almost every English-speaking country in the world. Government departments at home and overseas read D.N.L. Public Libraries in Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada file D.N.L. on their reference shelves. But more important than these, our readers are drawn from among those who are keeping alive a detached focus on propaganda and education at a time when such things are only too easy to lose.

Training the Army

OF ALL ORGANISATIONS making instructional films in peacetime, the army had the poorest reputation: its films were thoroughly bad in every way. Though the war has brought about sweeping changes in army organisation, the section dealing with the production of technical and instructional films seems to have been overlooked. Responsible for the ordering of production is a Colonel, recently promoted from Major, who, as far as we know, has no experience of film production, though he has decorated his office with the more lurid posters of American feature films. Working to the Colonel is a Major, recently promoted from Captain, who was associated with British comedy feature productions. Working to the Major, is a Captain, recently promoted from Lieutenant, an actor and commentator listed in *The Spotlight* as a

"Feature Comedian." Judging by the scripts which have been hawked about Wardour Street, an enquiry into the methods and experience of the technical film section of the army is overdue. At the least, the army authorities might consult the technical film section of the R.A.F. which has sponsored some of the finest technical films yet made in Britain.

Training Army Film Officers

THE MARCH OF TIME is training men of the U.S. armed services in cinematography, and three marines and two coast-guards have been seconded to the New York studio. Have the British armed forces, and especially the army, considered solving their own film difficulties by attaching likely men to the newsreel and documentary companies to be trained? This might go far to remove the incompetence which is so marked a feature of army films.

Military Service

A TRIBUNAL, drawn from the Film Industry, has been set up to consider the claims of film workers for deferment from military service, and to make recommendations to the Minister of Labour. The members of the tribunal are Major R. P. Baker (Features), Captain Crickett (Secretary of the *Film Artists' Association*), Arthur Elton (documentary and short films), George Elvin (Secretary of the *Association of Cine-Technicians*), T. O'Brien (Secretary of the *National Association of Theatrical and Kinematograph Employees*), Maurice Ostrer, Chairman (Features), F. Watts (Newsreels) and Miss Woods, Secretary drawn from the permanent staff of the Ministry of Labour. Such a tribunal has become urgently necessary. The film industry—at any rate, the *sound-film* industry, and documentary in particular, is a young industry. Many key documentary directors and a few documentary cameramen are under thirty—the age of reservation. It is to be hoped that, in the national interest, the essential technicians will be allowed to carry on their work.

Brassières

FOR THE PAST few years the advertising industry has been faced with the need to readjust itself to new social conditions. For the most part it has obstinately entrenched itself behind a technique of chorus girls and chocolate-box pictures—what we may call the brassière school of advertising. Documentary film directors have long recognised this technique of advertising as out of date, and have allied themselves to that school of thought which supports what is called "Public Relations". It is not often that the backwardness of advertising is recognised by practitioners of that "art" and for that reason Mr. Buchanan-Taylor's speech, printed in another part of this issue, is of great importance. His point of view reflects a constructive outlook which can go far to putting the advertising industry on a sound, not to say a decent and honest, footing.

49th Parallel

THE PRESS lately has been full of *The 49th Parallel*, a feature film on Canada, partly financed by the Films Division of the M.O.I. This film has gone wrong, largely because the star, Austrian-born Elizabeth Bergner, refuses to return to London from Hollywood to complete the studio scenes. Among the general sensation-mongering, two points have been overlooked; the idea of the original script was and remains a good one; in spite of Miss Bergner's absence, there is, as yet, no reason to suppose, either that the film will not be finished, or that it will not be a success.

The Imperial Theme

FOR ALL WE see of the Empire on the public screens of Great Britain, it might be as important to this country as a village in Manchuria. We neither see the imperial scene nor hear the imperial voice. The newsreels confine themselves to the stamping feet of the Dominion soldiers, but their personalities, their lives, their culture remain as remote as those of the Chinese. Are we never to bring alive the horizon of Empire? We in Britain want to be on familiar nodding terms with the sheep farmers of Australia, the timber men and wheat farmers of Canada, the miners of South Africa, and the livestock breeders of New Zealand. Canada is the only Dominion so far to take itself seriously on the screen, and four or five films made in Canada are already in this country; but even these concentrate on the fighting services and not on the mode of living which Canada is fighting to protect. Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (with the exception of a thoroughly bad film from the latter country) seem to have made no attempt to reach our screens. From what we can hear, our own attempts to reach the screens of the Dominions are equally ineffective. If we are unable to express the solidarity of the English speaking peoples within the Empire then there must be something seriously wrong with our communications.

Central Film Library

A FIRST DUPLICATED list of new films in the *Central Film Library* has been circulated and may be obtained from any of the M.O.I. regional offices, or from the Imperial Institute, S.W.7. The list contains no less than 66 films, nearly all of them produced since the outbreak of war, and represents perhaps the most important collection of documentary films ever to be released at one time under one authority. The Films Division deserve the thanks of everyone interested in the film as propaganda and as a method of widening cultural life. The films themselves are of a high technical level and represent a genuine liberal outlook.

Corrections

WE SALUTE the vigilance of the many readers who have pointed out two errors in our *Film of the Month* article in the November issue of D.N.L. The producer of *Rebecca* was, of course, Selznick, not Zanuck; and McCrea is the correct spelling of the name of the star in *Foreign Correspondent*.

YOU CAN'T BE SMART ABOUT NEWTS

The spoken word in films and broadcasting, by VOX POPULI

CRITICS of the M.O.I. short film, *Britain Can Take It*, have remarked upon the perfect liaison achieved between the film itself and the commentary spoken by Mr. Quentin Reynolds, an American journalist, and the fact that it should have called forth such unanimous comment suggests that such perfect liaison is very rarely achieved.

In *Britain Can Take It* no attempt is made to dramatise the tremendous situation of a great city standing up to a full-scale bombardment from the air—just the bare facts in pictures and in words, and these words spoken in a very simple straightforward way, as one would speak to a receptive child, no false pity, no patronage and no patriotic.

The effect of this discretion is, of course, to increase the hitting power of the film, since the very moderation of the treatment helps to set free in the minds of the audience the anger and resolve which a more violent technique would only have cancelled out. This use of understatement is not new. It is at least as old as Shakespeare, who advises his actors to "acquire and beget a temperance" in their work, and not to "tear a passion to tatters." Nor is it very remarkable—its chief quality as a technical device is that if you were not on the lookout for it it might escape you altogether. But it is very rarely seen in such perfect visual and aural combination as in *Britain Can Take It*, and when this film is seen in the same programme as other documentaries it sets one thinking very hard about the exact function of the commentary in a short film.

Perhaps my own experience was particularly unfortunate, for I happened to see a coloured short called *Water Babies* immediately after *Britain Can Take It*. *Water Babies* must be one of the best things Mary Field has ever done. It is simply a life history of newts. First the mating, then the laying of the egg and its successful camouflage against the terrifying water beetles hunting for food, then the tadpole gradually taking shape inside the swelling case and, at last, the birth itself and the uncertain efforts of the baby newt to conquer its new element. Last of all, the shedding of the gills and the first journey as an amphibian. The whole thing is done with astonishing patience and economy and is tremendously exciting, as only the elemental processes of Nature know how to be when they are tenderly and delicately explored.

But it would be difficult to imagine anything more out of place than the commentary which accompanies this little masterpiece. This is spoken by Emmett, who makes the mistake of attempting to add something of his own to what is already absolutely complete—what we call, in the country, "pumping on a full bucket".

Some words of explanation are perhaps necessary here and there, but only of the very simplest kind. Emmett is essentially a performer, a virtuoso of the microphone—moreover, a

virtuoso with a streak of the comedian about him. He will play for laughs. And being a single act, he naturally wants to put across that act, because he believes that the public are waiting for it, because he is a very excellent showman, and because comedy is in his blood. Why should he step aside for newts?

Well, he gives his own act (a very skilled act) in front of the mike, and this act naturally comes into collision with the film. Not just a scrape and a bent mudguard. Head on. For the aim of the film is obviously to delight and instruct, while Emmett's is just as obviously to entertain and amuse, more often than not at the expense of the chief actors in the picture. In fact, Emmett makes the mistake of trying to compère the newts as if they were human performers and he cracks gags about them as a good compère will crack gags about the actors in a show. In the theatre, of course, the smarter the gag the better. But you can't be smart about newts. They beat you to it every time. And in any case no one wants you to be smart about newts. Newts can take care of themselves.

So much for the manner of the commentary. With regard to the matter, Miss Field herself must take a share of the blame—or did Emmett's reputation as a commentator carry the Field? In any case, the application of human social values—mainly trivial, like "giving him the once-over," "making a date" and "new spring suitings" (I quote from memory, but this gives a fair indication), is extremely insulting to audience and to newts, and in exceedingly bad taste, the inference being that newts cannot hold our attention unaided and that a sort of condiment of facetious human social parallel will help to put them across. Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee* is a classic example of this mistake, in which the human erotic life is used as the measuring stick for bees. But there is this to be said for Maeterlinck. He doesn't try to be smart.

It is obviously a mistake to employ a professional virtuoso commentator on such a job. He is naturally more interested in his own performance than he is in newts. He may, of course, quite like newts, but he will still be unable to hide his professional style and his individual technique. What you want is someone who loves and understands newts and who has no set microphone manner. Why not Miss Field herself? Or one of the naturalists who worked with her? Someone without tricks. I remember seeing a film about gannets commentated by Julian Huxley. Simple, unassuming, convincing, and relying on the subject itself to hold all the necessary interest, i.e., accepting the premise that documentary is firstly a graphic and not a literary form and, therefore, that the aural element should always be subordinated to the visual. It always is subordinate in point of fact, because no spoken words, however delivered, can compete with a moving picture, but they can, and often do, intentionally or unintentionally, TRY to

compete, and thereby have an irritation value which throws everything out of gear.

For, when you come to think it over, the whole business of microphone announcement is fast deteriorating into one big verbal legerdemain.

What are the conventional "essentials" of the good "announcer voice"? I suppose it should have "pleasant quality", that it should be "well placed", and that it should be "cultured". Let us examine first the necessity for correct "placing". This is largely a matter of frontal or dental production, without which no voice will carry. But from our point of view this amounts to exactly nothing at all, since in microphone work the voice does not need to carry beyond the microphone itself. Once there, a distance of two feet, you're home.

"Pleasant quality" doesn't mean very much either, because when you have asked yourself "pleasant to whom?", the only answer is "pleasant to the people who choose the announcers". And as it is probably the dearest ambition of the people who choose the announcers to be able to talk just like announcers, and as they probably DO talk just like announcers, where are we?

The real snag, as in so many other departments of modern life, is of course the word "cultured". What is culture and with whom is it chiefly repositied? Day-to-day events are compelling us to reconsider all the old answers to this question.

The other day a friend made me a present of a set of dialect records published by Columbia—a dozen 12-inch discs covering most of the British Isles and all spoken by natives. They present an astonishing variety of pronunciation and an exhilarating exhibition of vitality and variation of rhythm. Whole octaves of the voice are used, and not three or four notes, as in so-called standard speech. Spoken English suddenly comes to life, and it would be impossible to imagine a better pick-me-up after a dose of Nine O'Clock News Blues.

Why, I ask myself, do I never get this tonic impression from E. V. H. Emmett, R. E. Jefferies or from Stuart Hibberd, Alvar Liddell, Joseph Macleod, Bruce Belfrage and the Grisewood Brothers? Why, with such a varied and subtle and resourceful language at hand, should the announcement side of it be for

the most part confined to these punch-drunk mahogany sounds, this weary, stale, flat, unprofitable and purely bastard speech which is current nowhere except at the more expensive Public Schools, at the two senior Universities, in the Church, and in one or two other odd and exclusive corners of the land? And what relation does this purely bastard speech, this cautious, correct mode of expression, with its single, senseless set rhythm for every kind of sense content, its maddening vocal efficiency and its deadly air of patronage, bear to life as it is lived on Tyneside, on Clydebank, in Clerkenwell, in the Chilterns, in the Cotswolds, in Cumberland, in Cornwall or in Kent, or anywhere else? And what percentage of the population of these islands, the last bulwark of Militant Democracy, would wish to identify themselves with this fountain of gentility and sterility? Why should all the announcers be chosen according to this wearisome pattern, and why should they all use the manner of the glorified shop-walker who calls the customer "Sir", but who has no doubts about his own superiority.

I can find only one answer, that somehow this kind of speech is thought to be exclusively connected with Culture and Enlightenment. Despite the fact that a broadcast by Greenwood or Priestley or a few rare words by a Gloucestershire shepherd shows the whole thing up as a vast sham, and blows the whole brigade of trained announcers into the big drum, it seems that we are to be condemned for ever to an official vocal snobbery which can have as its basis nothing but a fundamental distrust of common people and common things. I can only adapt the words of one of our greatest foes, and say "If this is culture do let us reach for our guns". It is not a question of bringing to the microphone people with thick country accents. It is a question of using again, after years of neglect, some of the great bone and sinew which is part and parcel of the common English tongue. For we have come to a great cross-road in our history, a point at which sooner or later an appeal will have to be made to the vitality of the People instead of to the divine right of the Public School, and nowhere in our everyday life is this problem shown more clearly than in the matter of microphone announcing.

PEOPLE IN GLASS HOUSES

The Film Institute drops a brick

THE FILM INSTITUTE has done good work in the academic field, but when it takes a hand in policy formation, at best it dirties the pitch, at worst it makes itself, and the educational film it seeks to support, an Aunt Sally for every influence hostile to the proper development of the film in national and cultural life. The latest issue of its journal, *Sight and Sound* (financed, be it noted, along with the Institute, out of public

funds by a grant from the Privy Council), devotes a number of editorials to telling the British Council and, in particular, the Films Division of the M.O.I. where they make their mistakes. The Institute is certainly the last body to attempt a public reconciliation between the British Council and the Films Division if, as an editorial suggests, there is friction between them. The reputation of the Institute as a moulder of

policy remains a poor one, and it commands little respect outside its specialised field of promoting the use of the film in education. Heaven knows, the film in education needs every resource that the Institute can command to defend it, yet it is rare for the Institute to come out publicly and fearlessly on such vital issues as the damaging tax on sub-standard films, administered by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise.

For the Institute to call officers of the Films Division "fledgling Civil Servants whose little spell of brief authority seems to have gone to their heads" is a case of a pretty dirty pot calling a fairly clean kettle black. The reason for the outburst is that the Institute claims that the Films Division has paid too little attention to the report of the Select Committee, discussed in the October issue of D.N.L. One of the main

recommendations of this report was, incidentally, the heavy curtailment of the public use of non-theatrical films, a system which the Institute has made it its business in the past to foster.

Though the various suggestions made by the Institute since the outbreak of war for improving the film situation have been largely ignored, this is no excuse for bad temper. The spectacle of one publicly financed body attacking another which, by Civil Service etiquette, is debarred from reply is disagreeable. If the Institute, through *Sight and Sound*, is to dip into inter-Civil Service politics, it might direct its critical vigilance towards the Board of Education. Fair game, since the Board is deeply concerned with the Institute's well being.

BRITISH NEWS

The old, old story

THOSE DEPARTMENTS who have been in charge of our film propaganda have long advocated, and have concentrated on, newsreels as the spear-head of our overseas propaganda. It is true that for speed and for recording of day-to-day happenings, there is an excellent case to be made for them. Unfortunately, there has been a reticence in official quarters concerning their distribution and their composition.

British newsreels have never been noted for their progressive thinking nor for their progressive film technique. There are some who have said that British newsreel compilation and technique still has its roots in "silent" days. Compared with the imagination of the French and German newsreels, and the showmanship of the American newsreel, the British newsreel compares unfavourably.

An opportunity has been taken of seeing six of the more recent reels of *British News* issued by the British Council. This newsreel is made up of items culled from all the newsreels. The work is done in rotation by each of the newsreel companies working under the supervision of a films committee of the British Council.

It is apparent that all the faults associated with the individual British newsreel are even more exaggerated in the composite reel. From the film point of view, its technical qualities are poor. The sound recording, the cutting from one item to the next and methods of presentation are crude, and in sending a newsreel to countries dominated by the American newsreel, this fault is unforgivable. The standard opening is dull and pompous. A musical recording has been attempted, similar to the opening of feature films. It has the pomposity of feature film opening music without any other merit.

This musical opening covers shots of six trumpeters blowing

a fanfare, which dissolve to a picture of Windsor Castle which, in turn, dissolves to a picture of the Houses of Parliament and then back into the trumpeters. We are given the full benefit of the very dull shots, which are badly photographed and much too long. The reels we saw then opened with the doings of royalties or with the bomb damage of London or the two together.

The handling of all the items is extremely superficial. There is still the same patronising attitude towards ordinary people—a common factor in all British newsreel treatment; and because the individual items are at least twice as long as those normally shown in this country, one has time to ponder on the appallingly bad photography, direction and treatment.

It has been said that Americans have expressed high praise for the editions of the reel shown in the World's Fair. It is to be wondered whether this praise was due more to kindness than conviction, because *British News* does not in any way reach the standards of the American newsreel. One can imagine the praise is that of a tolerant parent.

As the Select Committee* suggested that *British News* should be the only newsreel issued, and that the Ministry of Information should withdraw its own reel, one can only assume that the Ministry's newsreel is a shade worse. That is, provided that there was no wire pulling, and that the Selection Committee had an opportunity of seeing both versions, and was composed of people capable of achieving a reasonable standard of criticism. For if *British News* is the best we can do, it would be better to have no newsreel propaganda at all, and to sacrifice speed for the more considered or specialised film such as *London Can Take It*.

*See D.N.L. for October.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

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NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Neighbours Under Fire. Production: Strand for M.O.I. Direction: Ralph Bond. Distribution: Theatrical. 5 minutes.

MANY AIR-RAID problems only begin when the bombs have stopped falling. *Britain Can Take It* told the story of the civilian army which goes into action when the siren sounds the Alert. *Neighbours Under Fire* portrays the less spectacular heroisms which come later, when the dust has settled and the homeless no longer look back on last night's horror but forward to problems which courage alone will not solve. For a while it is enough to have escaped from the bomb that demolished your home, but when the immediate danger is passed there is food to be found for the family and new shelter from the bombs which will fall again tonight. "Last night my house was hit by a bomb", says a woman in the film and then talks quietly on, her voice hushed by such an unbelievable calamity—"and all the things have gone. What shall I do?" The film presents an answer for her and for other air-raid victims who are shown telling their story with the same simplicity. Patiently, without complaint, they all reveal a touching faith that something will be done for them. The film answers their problem by showing the work of the voluntary services in organising rest-centres and communal meals, in furnishing advice on evacuation and in organising entertainment in the shelters. It is not a complete answer and the film does not pretend it is. But it is clear that the faith of the victims in the power of the authorities to succour them was at first better justified by the voluntary services than by official schemes. The men and women of these services stepped, in the nick of time, into a no less vital breach than did the firemen and the first-aid parties. "As always", says the commentator, "it is the poor who help the poor".

Neighbours Under Fire is a five-minute film, but five minutes is not long enough to do justice to this story. Yet the problem is stated, the people are real, their reactions are authentic; and the urgent need for thorough provision to be made for the welfare of air-raid victims who have escaped only with their lives is admirably conveyed by the final shots of homeless shelterers huddled together in fitful sleep underground, while overhead the bombs and guns are beginning again.

Ministry of Food Cookery Hints. *Oatmeal Porridge; Potatoes; Casserole Cooking; Steaming; Herrings.* Production: Verity Films. Direction: Jay Gardner Lewis. Photography: S. D. Onions. Distribution: M.O.I. Non-T. 6 minutes each.

WHEN EVERY short production company is working to capacity, and films are delayed for

lack of directors, it is good to welcome a new company which can immediately take its place in technical competence alongside other and older established units. The films listed above are the first batch of productions from *Verity Films*, founded as recently as last May, though its members are old hands at film making. The aim of *Ministry of Food Cookery Hints*, to be circulated through the M.O.I. non-theatrical system, is to persuade people to make the best of wartime provisions. Each film in the series is in the form of a demonstration, well directed and photographed and clearly explained. By showing one small group of recipes only and showing them in detail, and by keeping each film short, the complexities which spoil most cookery films have been avoided. And in one case—the boning of a herring—the action is firmly shown a second time, in case one has missed some of the detail in the first viewing. This is a great success, but we suspect that the director lost his nerve after this one repetition, for we should have liked to have seen other repetitions. When something is clearly photographed, clearly directed and worth learning, it is worth seeing twice, or even three times.

Such films are important, particularly at the present time, yet they are so humble in intention that they are rarely well made. *Verity Films* have been sensible in bestowing such care on the present batch, and we hope that the M.O.I. will influence other government departments to follow the Ministry of Food. We should like to see, not only more films on cookery and nutrition, but films on agriculture (in the style of *Silage*, reviewed in D.N.L. October), hygiene and public health, laundering and dress making, and infant welfare, to mention only a few subjects.

An Unrecorded Victory. Production: G.P.O. for the M.O.I. Producer: Cavalcanti. Direction: Humphrey Jennings. Photography: Chick Fowle and Jonah Jones. Music by Liszt. Distribution: T. and Non-T. 2 reels.

THERE ARE TWO unrecorded victories here; one is the subject of the film, and the other is the fact that the film has at last, after many months of delay, been allowed to reach the public screens (it was originally entitled *Spring Offensive*). It covers the first year of agricultural England's war, and its story is of the reclaiming of derelict land and the gathering of a harvest therefrom. It is therefore a story equally suitable for times of peace, and this is firmly pointed out by the commentary, at the end of the film, which reminds us not to neglect the people of the land after this war as we did after the war of 1914-1918.

Air Communique. Production: G.P.O. for the M.O.I. Distribution: Theatrical. 5 minutes.

THIS is a neat addition to the Five Minute series, showing how careful the R.A.F. intelligence service is in computing accurate figures of destroyed enemy machines. It is very slickly edited, and the points it makes stick firmly in the mind. Perhaps it is a pity that the day chosen is that on which 185 Germans were shot down; to-day, the computation of a more average bag might be more effective. Still, it will do no harm to remind audiences of the smashing up of the German plan for mass daylight raids, and the film will certainly increase confidence in our informational services and in the types of men who fly our fighters.

Britain's R.A.F. Production: March of Time (No. 6, Sixth Year). Distribution: R.K.O., Radio Pictures. Two reels.

Britain's R.A.F. is much better *March of Time* than some of the recent ones. They have had first class facilities from the Air Ministry and their cameramen have taken advantage of them to turn in some of the best aerial photography for a long time. But even so, and allowing for the fact that the film is intended primarily for the States, it is not really a satisfactory job.

It opens with an air battle over Dover, including some sensational shots of barrage balloons being shot down and the A.A. shells bursting round the machines, and then goes on to a review of the Fighter, Bomber and Coastal Commands, passing en route a meeting of the Air Council and the Canadian training scheme. The idea is to give a clear picture of the construction and working of the R.A.F. as well as a bit of excitement and a propaganda boost, but unfortunately the *March of Time* technique is unequal to the strain. As the hypnotising voice of the commentator booms on, we suddenly find that we have passed from one Command to the next without noticing it, a shot of each Command's badge hardly being sufficient transition. And it is high time they learned that you can't establish facts and figures over shots of youths filing through doorways and such like fill-ups; *March of Time* ought to be above such laziness and sloppy scripting. But where they get down to showing an actual job being done, as in the work of the Coastal Command, the film comes alive, though the emphasis on the Lockheed Hudsons being American seems overstrained. Perhaps American war jitters and their feeling of helpless frustration preclude them from balanced comment on the war. Otherwise they could never have committed the dreadful bloomer of finishing the film with trainees singing, in no very enthusiastic fashion, that mournful dirge "There'll always be an England".

(continued on page 9)

VERITY FILMS •

Just completed, five non-theatrical films produced and directed by J. Gardner Lewis, for the Ministry of Information—Ministry of Food Cookery Hints 1 to 5

Oatmeal Porridge, Herrings, Potatoes,
Casserole Cooking, Steaming.

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MOTION PICTURE ENGINEERS

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS (continued)

Young Veterans. Production: Ealing Studios. Producer: Cavalcanti. Editing: Charles Crichton. Commentary: Spoken and written by Michael Frank. Distribution: Theatrical. 25 minutes.

Young Veterans is one of the first batch of Cavalcanti's new productions at Ealing. If this is a typical example, Cavalcanti's unit is assured of a distinguished future. *Young Veterans* is a history of the War till to-day, told not in terms of dates and figures, but in terms of sentiment. Cavalcanti has done what is perhaps the most difficult job of all, the recreation of feeling. We feel the suspense of August, 1939, and the emotion caused by the outbreak of war. Our spirits rise with the attack on Norway and sink when the troops are recalled. The first optimism engendered by the B.E.F. in France gives way to depression as we come to Dunkirk. The film ends with the creation of Britain's citizen army.

Most films which attempt a history of our own times, and particularly a history of the present war, are stale and flat. Cavalcanti's film has avoided this staleness; its vividness, its skill in recreating a mood, its obvious sincerity are so moving.

The technical virtuosity of *Young Veterans* (which never obtrudes) is admirable. The film is made largely from library material skilfully woven with new shooting. The collection and selection of this library material must have been an enormous task, and no one without Cavalcanti's detailed knowledge of this field could have done it. Moreover, he has managed to avoid all the stock library shots which crop up monotonously in every war film.

The material is new and fresh. The editing is expert and imaginative. There is an admirable sequence in which the drawings of "Young Bert" are brought to life. The sound track is the more telling since it is of the simplest. The commentary is as good of its kind as we have heard. No one save Cavalcanti could have made this film.

Wings of Youth. Production: The National Film Board of Canada. Producers: Stuart Legg and Raymond Spottiswoode. Associate Director: Roger Barlow. Distribution: Theatrical, and M.O.I. Non-T. 13 minutes.

Wings of Youth is another of the Canadian Government's one-reelers. They are usually on topical subjects and issued once a month. This one describes the Empire Air Training Scheme. Starting with Canadians in the last war, it comes quickly to the point, and we see some very nice material of the training scheme. One trainee is picked, and we follow him through until the final sequence—his first solo.

The trainee sequences are spaced with the building of trainer planes and the training of crews, but because the film moves at such an incredible speed, and the commentator never pauses, the effect is one of confusion. The commentary is so full of facts and figures, names and information, that at the end of the film you are dazed. Give

us one fact instead of twenty. One idea instead of five. One word instead of a hundred. One shot instead of three. Give us a little punctuation—a quieter spoken commentary.

These films are made primarily for the American and Canadian markets, but I cannot believe that the new world speaks and thinks so much faster than we do.

Scotland's War Effort. Production: Strand. Producer: Alex Shaw. Direction: Jack Ellitt. Commentary: George Blake. Distribution: T and Non-T.

APART FROM its special wartime message, this film is one of the best and most articulate of all the documentaries on Scotland. It stresses the great diversity of human types and characters and accents which are Scotland's great fascination, and it places in proper perspective the abruptly changing face of the land which will never cease to astonish both the casual traveller and the faithful native. It is Jack Ellitt's first film, and is wisely shaped in the simplest of forms, a series of episodes and sequences tallying with the main Scottish activities—the industrial workers of the Clyde, the Highland sheep farmers, the fishermen, and so on—not, of course, forgetting the inevitable army shots. It is not the ideal shape, but it has given Ellitt the chance to try his paces over the furlong of sequence rather than the full course of a reel, and within sequence limits he has achieved much that is pleasing and a certain amount that is impressive. The cutting is very good throughout, and so is the commentary.

Fruits from the Garden (1 reel). Odd Jobs in the Garden (1 reel). Winter Storage (1 reel). A Garden Goes to War (3 reels). Production: Plant Protection Ltd. Distribution: Non-T. 16 mm. colour. Silent.

THESE films contain a great deal of valuable information and advice. They are very simply made, without any production pretensions (and indeed at times without correct camera exposure for colour). *Fruits from the Garden* rather belies its title by dealing almost exclusively with the necessity for banding and spraying. The method of grease-banding is clearly shown, also tar-oil spraying in winter and lime-sulphur spraying at pink-bud stage in spring; the pests attacked by the sprays are also shown. It is a pity, perhaps, that no pruning hints are given and that no reference is made to the necessity for a good pressure to be maintained in spraying, particularly as regards tar-oil.

Odd Jobs in the Garden deals with weed-killing, and fertilisers for cuttings (with special details on currants). Here one becomes a little too aware of the proprietary articles which are (though not really unjustifiably) used as illustrations throughout the film. Surely a reel dealing so largely with fertilisers should pay at least a passing tribute to the no doubt bulky, old-fashioned, but none the less efficient organic manures?

However, amends are made to some extent in *A Garden Goes to War*, which contains a very good sequence showing how to make a compost heap. In three reels the whole cycle of garden operations is touched on. The sequences on double digging, ridging, and the control of common pests such as flea-beetle and cabbage white are admirable. The scenes dealing with the preparation of seed beds, and with sowing, might however be improved by a reference to the different types of soil. Some of the instructions might lead astray any beginner whose soil was a heavy clay.

Winter Storage deals with the storing of roots in sand or ash, with the saving of seed, and with the method of salting runner beans, which is admirably illustrated.

The general criticism of these films is that they often give too little information for the beginner, but do not indulge on the other hand in technicalities which would appeal to the more experienced gardener. But this criticism does not invalidate the series, which contains much of interest and importance to both.

Health in War. Production: G.P.O. for the M.O.I. Direction: Pat Jackson. Distribution: M.O.I. Non-T. 10 minutes.

Health in War, a M.O.I. non-theatrical one-reeler, is mainly concerned with the wartime running of London hospitals, showing how most of their beds have been evacuated to the outskirts in order to leave their central wards free for air-raid casualties. And while the film concentrates on this line it is excellent, with nice shooting of ambulances, accidents, blood-transfusion and convalescence in the country. The children, particularly, in mobile close-ups are specially well done.

But unfortunately the film attempts more than this—it aims at a lyrical note on life in the country, and the way Britain was going before the war, with a note on war-aims and the future generation. And here the film falls down pretty badly. There is a much too long opening pointing out the pleasures of peace time, which seem to have consisted of village-green cricket (which still goes on anyway—the only difference in our village being that the sides are posted as "We and They" instead of the villages by name), bathing and countryside views. The slums, we are told, were fast disappearing, and being replaced by something far better (blocks of flats), and a beneficent rule was just establishing an earthly paradise. This view is flatly contradicted later in the film by ecstatic praise of schools and big mansions being taken over for sick and convalescent, country nurseries for kiddies and general guff about how good it is for children to be in the country. If all this is so admirable, it is surprising that there was no more in this direction in the piping times of peace (which were so swiftly bringing the millennium) and that it has taken the war to bring about this happy state. No, indeed. The war may be pretty awful, but at least in some respects it is better than what we had to stick before; there'll be no return to those days, let's hope.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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THE SHAPE OF ADS. TO COME

By W. BUCHANAN-TAYLOR, Honorary Publicity Adviser to the National Savings Committee and President of the Incorporated Society of Advertisement Consultants.

An address delivered at the Publicity Club of Leeds on October 17th, 1940 (abridged).

Often I wonder if, when this war draws to a conclusion, the people in advertising will expect to start again where they left off. I am sure that in the minds of most of those concerned, the present situation is nothing more than a hiatus. I make no bones about boldly prophesying that if such a belief exists a great many people are in for a shock. Advertising will not pick up where it left off. That is certain. I make this statement in face of the smug satisfaction which rests serenely on the minds of the people who have appointed themselves as official caretakers of advertising interests. This coterie, which bears the headpiece of a so-called ruling body, has done absolutely nothing for the benefit of advertising as a business nor for those employed in it, since that memorable day, the 3rd of September, 1939.

While they have twaddled conventionalities, some evidences of progress have emerged in other places. For instance, for the first time in the history of advertising, the rank and file workers have founded a union. The causes of this foundation are not far to seek. They can be found in the incontrovertible fact that when the Big Funk happened, in the wake of war, the rank and file were scattered adrift like cremated bones strewn to the four winds of heaven.

Many of those advertisers and advertising agents who were so fond of proclaiming at conventions that no less than £100,000,000 was spent yearly on advertising in Great Britain, cut down their staffs ruthlessly. Many of the heads fled instantly to remote parts of the country, keeping a mere skeleton staff to carry on. The few who did not panic kept their ground and treated their staffs reasonably. For the most part, however, they moved out frantically to the tune of "Run, Rabbit, Run."

At the outbreak of war there were far too many agents, even though recognised agents had been cut down in number from over 800 to something like over 300. Naturally, what with newspapers reduced from 16 and 20 pages in extent to 8 and then 6 pages, and rationed space, it was not possible to maintain all the agencies which had previously eked out an existence. Some of them had to go. It took a war to bring about overdue elimination. Many of them had lived precarious lives even in the days of comparative plenty. Will they come back in the post-war era? I doubt it. By the time that period comes round much more elimination will have happened. And with that

elimination will come many changes and reforms.

By the time this war is over we shall be much wider awake to the realities of life, more at grips with the essential fundamentals, and infinitely wiser about production, consumption, quality and actual necessities. And, incidentally, we shall be less slavish in our habits, less casual in our outlook, less liable to take things for granted and certainly more practical in our choice of goods and consumables. If you ask me if the post-war buying public is going to be satisfied with, or attracted by, the pre-war advertising blandishments and principles, I am tempted to say no.

Has it ever occurred to you to re-examine the pre-war claims made for certain much advertised commodities? Do you recall the extraordinary number of things without which life and happiness were incomplete? Let us look at what I call the "can't's". You'll remember that a new kind of starvation was invented and that without a regular dosage of the commodity with which starvation was associated, you couldn't hope to get to sleep of a night.

Then, you couldn't have a white sheet, a white nightdress or a white camisole unless you used one of those soap powders which seemed to abound. Boys and girls were going around hiding their shirts and things, lest they should be compared with their whiter neighbours' "what-not's". Think of the number of advertised products without which life was well-nigh unlivable. Your catarrh could be crashed in 24 hours for one shilling; yet medical and other scientists have been searching for years for a cure of this dread ailment, which is so prevalent throughout the country. They have not yet succeeded. One can only conclude they don't know anything about the subject. They needn't have wasted all those years on research. For one shilling they could have bought the freely advertised solution and could then have devoted their spare time to something really useful.

There was a series of adverts headed "Mr. Can and Mr. Can't". They proclaimed the benefits to be derived from the use of an old-established aperient. Nothing sacred: not even common decency. What has become of B.O.? And what was B.O. anyway? All the soap in the world could not diminish B.O. if the condition was constitutional or acquired from dirty innards. A schoolgirl complexion was promised by another soap purveyor. I'll warrant that more schoolgirl

complexions have been created by downright exercise and simple living in the A.T.S., W.R.E.N.S., and W.A.A.F.'s than by all the soap ever sold to a punch-drunk and gullible public. No need to go on with the long string of advertising fables and abuses. You don't need to be reminded of the toffee which was so energising that it enabled the lifeboatmen to battle with the wildest of storms and rescue the crew of a distressed vessel, or of the famous cigarette which you were asked to smoke "for your throat's sake."

Now, in the brave new world, towards which our thoughts and hopes are bent, shall we be again bull-dosed by such arrant nonsense or such dishonest quackery? I hope not. This war has already produced an awakening. We now know that things were not as they seemed. The lifting of the veil will not merely disclose chicanery in public life, party jobbery, unequal social gradings and business manipulations. It will give us a clearer view of personal rights and public duty. And advertising will not escape the process of disclosure.

Unless this is a completely hopeless world—which I do not believe it to be—the organization of human affairs will surely bring a state more honest and straightforward than the last. I am not among those who expect to see a resumption of the old order when hostilities cease. The millions of intelligent young people who have been jerked out of a lethargic existence of futility and the hopelessness of forced inequality are going to emerge with their eyes skinned, determined to correct the myriad social corruptions imposed on humanity. They are going to ask a lot of pertinent questions and demand a squarer deal from life.

There have been times in the last few years when I had begun to think that a square deal must be either an obtuse angle, an isosceles triangle or a double cross. Whenever a square deal ceases to be what its words imply, you may depend that it takes on the shape of a wedge, to be driven into the body politic. And it is probably superfluous to inform you that when any wedge is driven into any body it hurts the body more than it hurts the wedge.

The complaisance, inefficiency and incompetence which have, in many cases, characterised the approach to and the conduct of this war on our side is proof enough that a National shake-up was due. The odd thing about it all is that the country is full of practical brains, packed with untried efficiency and inventiveness. They are shrieking to be used.

And why, you may ask, are brains and efficiency debarred from functioning to the full in this, the greatest trial in our history? There are several reasons. The chief resistance comes from the existence of a system which has got completely out of hand. That system is bureaucracy. Its flower and fruit never flourished so abundantly than today. It has no relationship with the natural order of things. It is a negation of progress and a monumental barrier to performance. I refer to the system which has created a Civil Service which,

in its higher reaches, denies the claim of the citizen to his inalienable rights. It has made its own tempo and its movement is adagio. It is for the most part tortuous in its divertings, and dictatorial under its thick skin. It is all too powerful and all too aloof from realities.

With some notable exceptions, the hierarchy of the Civil Service has two ends in view—a pension and an honour. With those two things it can retire to its suburban cabbage patch and browse, free of the trammels of buff forms, circumlocution and its overgrowth of smoke-screen phraseology.

It feeds on a steady diet of *ad hoc*, ancillary, *de novo*, adumbrate, *per se*, abrogate and seconded. As a vehicle, its wheels have reached the post-creaking era. But, and here's the rub, it has been running this country for years, baffling the ordinarily intelligent citizen with a labyrinth of jargon, woven into meaningless patterns—like warp without a weft.

The Civil Service is cluttered up with men and women who believe they possess, among many other things, literary ability. They not only know how to write better than the professional writer, but scores of them try to cut into the literary game to add to their incomes, but always under the guise of a *nom-de-guerre*. They all have their personal—but autocratic—ideas about advertising and they blandly take publicity in their stride. They know how to make better films than the professional director, and their positive conceptions of commercial art as an aid to publicity make them better judges than the experienced artists themselves. In fact, there is no form of publicity and propaganda in which they are not experts. Do not be surprised if you hear of one of them re-writing Shakespeare and another reconstructing the Differential Calculus.

It is because executive Civil Servants are so abundantly equipped with a knowledge of how little the professional or business man knows about his profession or business that they resent in their midst the presence of specialists who have spent their lives learning their jobs. They know better what is best for any occasion than all the specialists. In times of stress they and their political friends get the executive positions, and then use the advice of the experts to hold them down.

I have said that Civil Servants have two ambitions—a pension and an honour. I have this to add: They must be careful not to make mistakes. Mistakes, quite rightly, are set against possible promotion. The easiest way not to make mistakes is to be non-committal. In other words do nothing.

Someone once called the heads of the Civil Service "The Better-Notters". It is better not to do something than to be found out as having done something which it would have been better not to have done. If the risk of a mistake is taken, in a very ebullient moment, you must be certain, in the Civil Service, to make the mistake in such a way that it will be difficult to trace. If you don't take that precaution you may be put on the carpet three years later—when the subject matter has passed into the limbo of the forgotten.

You will recall that it took several years of toilsome parliamentary pressure to assure for the workers of this country the concession of holidays with pay. During that struggle and, indeed, in the normal course of events, officers with £350 a year salary and more were automatically in receipt of 18 days holidays per year on pay and an additional compulsory sick-leave, on pay, of seven days per year. Thus most officials got a minimum of 25 days total leave on full pay. The sick leave was automatic and not on the strength of a doctor's certificate.

You may wonder why I have devoted so much of my address to the Civil Service. I have two reasons. My twelve months' experience as Honorary Publicity Adviser to the National Savings Movement has given me an insight into a new world, as divorced from practical and progressive business methods as a bastion is from a baby's rattle. I have been told, and I am prepared to believe it, that we in the National Savings Movement have the most go-ahead, highly geared coterie of all the Government Departments. Results seem to bear out this contention. Nearly £400,000,000 from the two restricted issues—Savings Certificates and Defence Bonds and P.O. Savings and Trustee Savings Bank Deposits—has been subscribed to date by the small investor. That figure of £400,000,000 was what Professor Keynes set as the necessary amount to be got from the small investor by compulsory savings. We shall beat £400,000,000 easily. There must be something in planned advertising and organisation after all. Our newspaper and journal advertising has cost less than one per cent of the money subscribed. Any expert will tell you that never in the history of advertising have such results been attained. The actual percentage is .0827.

Now what about "the Shape of Ads. to Come"? I have tried to indicate that great changes will come in the years which immediately follow the cessation of present hostilities. I think those changes will come chiefly from public attitude of mind, sane legislation, a re-organisation of production and consumption, the re-shaping of wholesale and retail distribution, and the elimination of those marketing schemes which do not provide for the full protection of the consumer.

The pseudo-governing body of advertising will have to suffer complete reform, for the abundant reason that, in future, advertising organisations will be accountable not merely to the advertiser but to the customer as well. And when the new Advertising Parliament, or whatever it may be called, comes through its searching examination, it will have to be the representative mouthpiece of the whole selling and buying elements of the country and not merely a metropolitan coterie of interested parties, protecting vested interests, as at present. The Civil Service type of hide and seek protective blab-blub which has permeated the councils and printed productions of the chief Advertising Organisation must go. Advertising, if it is to survive the coming test of public opinion, must submit willingly and helpfully to the operation.

If it doesn't it will croak.

THE GAS INDUSTRY'S FILMS AND THEIR AUDIENCES

The educational films produced by the Gas Industry in the year prior to the war have been seen by audiences totalling hundreds of thousands of adults and children and have won high praise.

Now, with its new war-time films, the Gas Industry is reaching new audiences and increasing the usefulness of its work.

The Industry's three food films—GREEN FOOD FOR HEALTH, WHAT'S FOR DINNER? and CHOOSE CHEESE—presented to the Ministry of Food in support of the National Food Campaign, have been used extensively in Food Weeks in all parts of the country. Together with another new gas film, IT COMES FROM COAL, these shorts have been added to The Central Film Library of the Ministry of Information.

Audiences who have seen and enjoyed Gas Industry Films include:—

SCHOOLS	BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS
INSTITUTES	HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES
ADULT EDUCATION GROUPS	MILITARY AND OTHER HOSPITALS
A.R.P. CENTRES	EDUCATION AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Gas Industry, conscious of the importance of this service to the community, plans to continue its policy of maintaining public relations by the use of films.

Applications for the loan of films should be made to the Ministry of Information or the Ministry of Food or direct to the

**BRITISH COMMERCIAL GAS ASSOCIATION
1 GROSVENOR PLACE
LONDON, S.W.1**

FILM SOCIETY NEWS

The National Film Library has put in hand the construction of a further block of twelve vaults specially designed for long-term film preservation in Buckinghamshire. These will be required in part for the storage of the library's own rapidly growing collection of films and in part for the storage of Government films, mainly records of the 1914-18 war.

Most notable among recent acquisitions to the National Film Library's Preservation Section is the whole of the film record of Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition comprising master prints of the two films made from it, *The Great White Silence* and *Ninety Degrees South*: this material has been presented on loan by the trustees. The Library continues to add to its collection of current entertainment features, and its newsreel section is to be augmented by a copy of each issue of *British News*, the composite newsreel edited by the British Council, the donors. An interesting early acquisition has been a copy of *Yvette*, one of the feature films made on the Continent by Cavalcanti.

The repairs to the Institute's premises, damaged by enemy action, are now well advanced and it is hoped they will again become habitable early in December. The viewing theatre has already been restored to use.

The Governors of the Institute have addressed a memorandum to the Court of the Goldsmiths' Company suggesting the expenditure of up to £400 on the making of a short series of experimental films for use by craft teachers in demonstrating the manipulation of silversmiths' tools.

A fourth supplement has been published to the list of films suitable for children. (Price 3d.).

The Tyneside Film Society is carrying on, although suitable films are not now so easy to get and many members are absent owing to evacuation and active service, because it is felt that the aims of the Society are just as important now as they were in peacetime. Everyone regrets the absence of Mr. M. C. Pottinger, who has been such an able secretary for many years, and this year became chairman of the Tyneside Film Association Ltd.; he resigned this office lately when he left to take up a commission in the R.N.V.R. The new chairman is Mr. B. S. Page, who has served on the committee for some years, and was at one time secretary of the Birmingham Film Society.

The first annual meeting took place recently of the Tyneside Film Association Ltd., the company limited by guarantee which was formed during last season to control the affairs of the Society. The company is in a very sound position and it was decided for 1940-41 to hold, at any rate, a first half-season of four private exhibitions on Sunday afternoons, to take place in the Haymarket Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on November 17, December 8, January 12 and January 26. For the first of these exhibitions the feature film was *Le Dernier Tourant*, and for other dates

it is hoped that some of the following will be available: *Remontons les Champs-Élysées*, *La Marseillaise*, *Ils Étaient Neuf Célibataires*, *Accord Final*. The programmes will also include some of the best available documentary and experimental films and cartoons, etc., and it is intended to continue having discussions on the films shown. It is very much hoped that conditions will allow of the season being extended further into the spring, as in previous years.

The Edinburgh Film Guild has shown remarkable initiative in its recent programmes. One was "timed to coincide with the Presidential elections and aimed to present a cross section of American life." The films shown included *New World Metropolis* (March of Time on New York), *Life in Sometown, U.S.A.* (an M.G.M. short directed by Buster Keaton), *The River*, and *Young Mr. Lincoln*. The second programme was dedicated to Holland, and included Joris Ivens' early film *Rain*, *Netherlands Old and New*, and Rutten's *Dood Wasser*. A Polish programme is being planned. The enterprise shown by this Society should be a help to others, who might well plan to run similar—or even identical—programmes.

The Stirlingshire Film Society and the Lochaber Film Society are starting up again. The former's first show was on November 24th.

Ayrshire reports a successful season in progress. This Society still operates from two centres, thus catering for the major population areas of the county.

On the initiative of the Glasgow Branch of the Association of Scientific Workers a meeting was recently called of people interested in scientific films, as a result of which it was proposed to form a Scientific Film Society in Glasgow. The programmes will be designed to show scientific films of popular appeal and an occasional high grade technical film. Membership is open to all who are interested, and the applications have

been so heavy that the lists have had to be temporarily closed.

The Society is holding six meetings during the winter at which 16 mm. films will be shown (the majority being sound films), and the subscription for the season is 5s. Members will be entitled to bring a limited number of visitors at a charge of 1s. for each performance, the account being rendered to members at the end of the season. If the membership is sufficiently large, a greater number of meetings may be held, and possibly one performance in a cinema. The formation of an experimental group is also under discussion.

The first meeting of the season was held in Room 24, the Royal Technical College, George Street, on Wednesday, 23rd October, at 7.30 p.m. The programme was as follows:—

- (1) P.F.B. Cine-Magazine (General).
- (2) Transfer of Power (Engineering).
- (3) Grey Seals (Natural History).
- (4) Smoke Menace (Public Health).
- (5) Distillation (Oil Refining).
- (6) King Penguins (Natural History).

Dundee and St. Andrews showed *City of Ships*, *Early One Morning*, and *Der Zerbrochene Krug* at the beginning of November, and *Peter the Great* at the end of the month. We are much indebted to the Secretary of this Society for sending us a cutting from a Scots paper which refers approvingly to the directorial work of Remontons' "Les Champs Élysées". Societies will no doubt look forward to seeing further examples of this new director's work.

The Manchester and Salford Film Society is still hoping to run a spring session, and in the meantime notes with approval the activity of the Manchester and District Film Institute Society, which has started a series of continental film shows at the Tatler Cinema, including *Pièges*, *Innocence*, *Ils Étaient Neuf Célibataires* and *Rois du Sport*.

CENTRAL FILM LIBRARY

The Ministry of Information has published its first list of 66 films available on 16 mm. A number are also printed on 35 mm. Application for the list should be made to the Regional Offices. All films were listed in the October issue of D.N.L. with the exception of a few titles added subsequently and listed below.

The following five-minute films are now available for non-theatrical use:—

The Front Line, *Britain Can Take It*, *Yesterday's Over Your Shoulder* and *Salvage with a Smile*.

A new series of cookery films is also available, under the general heading: *Ministry of Food Cookery Hints*. The subjects are:—

Oatmeal Porridge, *Herrings*, *Potatoes*, *Steaming*, and *Casserole Cooking*.

A silent version of *Miss T* has been added.

The titles of certain films appearing under "Films Commissioned by the M.O.I." on page 15 of the October issue of D.N.L. have been altered. *A Day in a Factory*, *The People's Health* and *School Services in Wartime* have been retitled *Speed Up and Welfare*, *Health in War* and *Tomorrow is Theirs* respectively.

FILM OF THE MONTH

EDISON, THE MAN. Production: M.G.M. Producer: John W. Considine, Jr. Director: Clarence Brown. With Spencer Tracy as Edison.

JUST NOW, some millions of people in this country and a good many millions more in Germany and other parts of the continent are very closely affected by two pieces of scientific work; the researches of Nobel, on high explosives, and the experiments of the Wright brothers with gliders. The one gave us the H.E. bomb, the other the aeroplane.

It may seem that Nobel and the Wright brothers are responsible for the bombs that rain on Europe. But these men did not intend that their discoveries should be used in this way.

Until we know better how the world about us really works, it is likely that we shall often let it get out of order—there will again be noises in the night, no onions to eat, people beaten because they happen to be called Jews, and others killed because they happen to be in the path of a bomb. Therefore films which tell the story of applied science are vitally important contributions to society.

Edison, the Man shows how some scientific discoveries were made, particularly electric light, and how they first came to be used.

Spencer Tracy is good star appeal as Edison who, penniless but ambitious, works as a cleaner in a New York financier's office. When a ticker tape machine goes wrong his experience as a telegraphist, and his mechanical ability, enables him to mend it. The mending of the machine is well done. Tracy obviously is a telegraphist to this extent: he simply sits intently at the machine, and hardly moving his hands, starts it again. Edison gets facilities to work on the improvement of the ticker tape machine. Yet his first concern in the film appears to be to help a girl whose umbrella blows inside out. She later becomes his wife. Edison improves the ticker tape machine and is paid 40,000 dollars for his work. One felt rather baulked at not being told what Edison really did with the machine, other than that he made lots of drawings.

The second half of the film deals mainly with the invention of the electric lamp. Edison, about to lose his laboratory at Menlo Park, goes to the financier for money. The man offers twice as much as Edison needs but wants to have a say in what is invented. Edison refuses to have his work, as a creative inventor, trammelled in this way. His invention of the phonograph—pleasantly treated—tides things over only for a while. He then goes back to an earlier idea, the possibility of electric light. The film treatment of this sequence is convincing and exciting. A lamp is fitted and the switch pressed. The carbon filament glows brightly in its vacuum. The group of workers stand round Edison to watch this new thing. Will it go on burning? The gas-light is turned out. Nobody misses it. The men just stare at the

lamp, achieved at last after trying 9,000 filaments. Until now they have just seen the filament glow brightly for a second or two—and then burn out. The lamp shines on for forty hours, while Edison and some of the lab. workers sleep round it. One of the men taps his watch and holds out his hand to another; the wager is silently passed.

When Edison wants to light New York, he asks for a concession to wire part of the city within a year—at his own expense. Here the film has something to say about the way discoveries in science are frustrated. For the man who first financed Edison has also a financial interest in a Gas Company, and uses all his influence to have Edison and his competing invention stopped. He succeeds at least in getting the concession limited to six months.

Five hours before the concession expires a trial run of the generators is made. Apparently somebody has put fireworks in the dynamos and arranged for a small earth tremor to visit New York at this moment. The dynamos discharge weird sparks and smoke, while the whole building rocks. What actually happened is not explained, so one can only go by what is seen on the screen. Clearly it is something very unusual because all the engineers—who have been with Edison throughout the film, and should know how their machines are likely to behave—scatter like rabbits and hide in corners. But Spencer Edison rises to the occasion, heroically pulls levers and turns wheels, and the fireworks subside. (Even if this incident is historically accurate it could have been made technically more convincing. It can only mislead and frighten the lay public. When things go wrong, competent workmen do not run away from their machines with every appearance of incompetence.) The damage can

be made good only by fitting a new shaft. This is finished one minute before the zero hour. New York has its lights, and the financier has his hat knocked over his eyes.

In spite of melodramatics and travesties of workshop practice, the broad impression of *Edison, the Man* is honest. There should be more films putting science into social perspective as effectively as this.

MONOLOGUE FROM "EDISON, THE MAN"

Reprinted by permission of
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Ltd.

My, my, my, I just had the funniest dream. I was dreaming about winter, and it was so cold that the trees couldn't shake, and daybreak froze fast just as it was trying to dawn.

Yes, Ma'am, all creation was freezing. The question was whether I was going to stay snug in bed, or get up and see what had happened. Well, I got up—and the earth had frozen fast on its axis. Couldn't turn around. Everything was pitch dark, too. The sun had got jammed in between two cakes of ice, and was working so hard to get loose that it froze in its own sweat.

Well, sir, I started off across country to see what could be done and I met a bear. I told him what had happened and he just naturally bounced up and down on the ice so hard that the hot oil welled out all over him.

Then I picked Mr. Bear up and I held him over the earth's axis, and I let the hot oil drip down.

Then I gave the earth's cog-wheel a little kick backwards, till I got the sun loose. The earth gave a grunt and began to move, and the sun waked up beautiful.

I lit my pipe by the light of his top-knot, and broke off a piece for myself. Yes, Ma'am, I walked home with the sunrise in my pocket.

THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH

A criticism of the March of Time feature film at present running in U.S.A. cinemas, but not yet released in this country

THIS is a bold attempt to present in film form the reactions of public opinion to world events over a period of very crowded history. By far the greater part of *The Ramparts We Watch* deals with the years 1914 to 1919, wisely leaving unattempted the delineation of the Twenties' smug chaos and the Thirties' panic-stricken rush into another war. The *March of Time* producers, faced with no mean problem of filmic construction, decided not to fly too high. They had at their disposal—or at any rate available—a vast amount of newsreel material, much of it of unique value. With this, the events of an

epoch could be authentically pictured—the battles and disasters, the great ones with their plumed helmets or gleaming toppers; the anonymous victims of twentieth century life, collapsing casually in a Flanders landscape amid smoke and gas, or running in blank amazement from the flaming horror of a sabotaged munition works; and, more important still for the purposes of the film, there were the crowds, jubilant, celebrant, or simply puzzled and waiting; the crowds—collections of black dots one minute, flashes of faces, smiling or sullen, the next; the crowds, erratic and impressive, being the

outward and visible sign of that mysterious and to politicians menacing object—Public Opinion. Out of these crowds the producers saw that they could make a satisfactory link between the general and the particular, between the clashing armies or the pronouncements of premiers and the puzzled or placid or suffering but always curiously self-contained individual, who in his circumscribed local life is also an aspect—philosophically if not politically just as disturbing—of Public Opinion.

The Ramparts We Watch therefore starts with a generalised statement about the U.S.A. of 1914, and then, to mirror attitudes and ideas in a more coherent form, takes us to an American small-town community, which remains throughout the film as the example of individual lives and opinions. This balances against the more generalised statements of the commentator. The small town is not the small town of the Hardys or the Bumsteads, nor could it with much accuracy be pinned to this State or that. Nor, on the other hand, is it a symbolic small town; but rather something betwixt and between, a kind of actuality microcosm of American citizenship.

We meet a lot of the inhabitants of this town, from the Congressman and the Editor of the local paper to various ordinary families, some wealthy and influential, some poor; some of English descent, some of German, some still immigrant, such as the Austrian factory hand with his wife and daughter. But the most striking thing is the way we meet them and get to know them. They are not pushed in our faces, established and labelled, at the beginning of the film. Their first appearances are anonymous. From newsreel shots we are led imperceptibly to staged small-town scenes in the same mood; and among the crowds, or in the shops, or in the small houses, the characters make their first appearance. We do not at first know which of them we shall see again. Thus we get to know them through time, just as we learn of their hopes and fears, which means their *opinion*, through time. And this makes them very much our neighbours rather than Hollywoodian simulacra. A large and anonymous cast, behaving rather than acting true to life, successfully wins our interest and our sympathy, rightly looms as large in the screen space as the figures of Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Hoover, King George V, and even little old Hitler, who inevitably pops up in the later reels, directing the blitz on Poland from an Olympian railway carriage, Goering obsequious in attendance, and the tight-lipped generals awaiting orders and hoping that the Fuhrer is still right.

American critics will no doubt be able to say if *The Ramparts We Watch* is an accurate picture of U.S.A. opinion during the World War. To the average Englishman the most striking point which emerges is the reluctance with which the people of the States came round to the idea of entering the last war. So many British people think of that event as being an automatic explosion after the *Lusitania* episode, and the *March of Time* version, by its emphasis on the period after the *Lusitania* sinking, appears to give the true version, a version indeed which is

not merely more sympathetic but also very instructive in relation to present happenings.

The detailed study of public opinion ends on New Year's day, 1919. The film then switches us direct to 1940, with, among other things, a reel from the Nazi film *Baptism of Fire*, complete with the original English commentary as recorded in Germany for propaganda purposes. (From this reel, by the way, one can understand how useful a film this must have been to the Fifth Columnists of Scandinavia and the Low Countries.)

Completed before the Presidential elections, *The Ramparts We Watch* is bound to have a somewhat cautious conclusion, but a final return to the New Year's party of our small town in 1919 gives a kick to the finale which is all the more effective in that it depends on implication, not statement.

It is to be hoped that *The Ramparts We Watch* will be shown over here in its entirety. Whatever renters or exhibitors may think about it, it is highly probable that the public (of our larger cities at any rate) would enjoy the whole ninety minutes worth; for the film is about something which very closely affects us; and it also reminds us that it might have been about ourselves.

THE CITY

Production: American Documentary Films under the auspices of the American Institute of Planners. *Direction and photography:* Rudolph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke. *Commentary:* Lewis Mumford. *Music:* Aaron Copland.

This film was the subject of controversy in the U.S.A. A copy has belatedly reached this country. Two D.N.L. reviews follow.

IT IS NOT easy, when deeply moved, to sit in sober judgment. Yet this is necessary if criticism is to be of value. Now the only certain statement the present reviewer can make is that this film will challenge you from one angle or another and in whatever way you feel yourself implicated. Its terms of reference could fairly be defined as "the significance of humanity in contemporary industrialised society." When you see the film you may feel that it brings the stubborn mockery and the beauty of life unbearably close, or that sometimes it is laboured. You may feel one of a dozen unpredictable things about it. Whilst admitting certain faults, it is one of the greatest documentaries ever made. A thesis rather than a review is demanded and this has already been done in Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities*.

The City is based on Lewis Mumford's famous book *The Culture of Cities* which analyses the historical phases and modern social consequences of metropolitan life. Like many social documentaries from the United States, it addresses its appeal to the heart rather than the head. American film-makers dealing with social and economic problems are generally reluctant to leave the

unembellished facts to tell their own story and beget their own emotional reaction. They believe that the facts must be aided by elaborate artifice of camera, cutting bench and recording studio and sometimes by conventional emotive imagery. To some of us the method seems to reveal a lack of confidence in the ability of the audience to see, understand and feel for itself. It is as if the director's emotions were an essential part of the story and that these must be revealed before the audience can draw conclusions of its own. Mumford's book is written with feeling, but he does not indulge his hatred for the modern consequences of industrialisation at the expense of the scientific analysis of cause and cure. *The City* does less than justice to his practical approach to the problem. The facts to which it limits itself could have been adequately expressed in five minutes screen time, yet the attempt to convey the director's feelings about them occupies five reels.

The theme of the film is that life was comfortable, healthy and safe in the New England township of the pre-industrial age, that industry and commerce have made life in the modern metropolis, uncomfortable, unhealthy and unsafe, and that if people choose they could even to-day, by proper town planning, live in comfort, health and safety again. Since the case against the social organisation of the big city is now common knowledge the key section of the film clearly is the final section which deals with the cure. But it is here that the film altogether ceases to be factual. We are shown scenes of model towns which may be located in Mars for all the information the film gives about them. There are recurrent scenes of boys riding bicycles or delivering newspapers which are apparently symbolic of the new order, yet we are given no hints of what sort of people are able to live in it, what their work is, what they earn and pay in rent, or of how this earthly paradise was built.

If what we are shown is ideal rather than real, surely we need some better indication of how it may be realised than is provided by the repeated exhortation to choose between the good life and the bad? We choose the good. Then what?

The best section of the film is the New England sequence on life before the coming of the industrial age. The film is beautifully photographed throughout and in this historical sequence the unquestioned ability of the production team to create atmosphere and mood finds full and legitimate scope. In the modern metropolis the essential characteristics of everyday life are well observed. Yet the citizens on the sidewalks whose unstudied gestures and mannerisms have been brilliantly caught by concealed cameras are not left to themselves to make their city come alive on the screen. They must be assisted by automata built up on the cutting bench in flash-cut "montage" sequences which borrow their inspiration from the film archives.

The scenes of industrial slums are the best that have ever been made. The whole film provides a sad example of how the theme and material for a potentially great picture have been spoiled by laying on the colour too thick with a worn-out brush.

PETROLEUM FILMS BUREAU

A new sound film AIRSCREW (35 mm. & 16 mm. 2 reels) has been added to the existing library of 25 films showing:—

How Oil is Produced and Refined

How People Use Oil

How Motor Cars Work

Four new films are expected to be ready in the New Year:—

Hydraulics

Turn of the Furrow

Cinemagazine No. 6

Malaria Control

Petroleum Films Bureau, 15 Hay Hill, London, W.1, Regent 6308

*Appreciation of our regular feature on
Documentary Films appearing in the*

“KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY”

The Leading Journal of the Film Industry

Ministry of Information,
Malet Street,
London, W.C.1.

DEAR MR RAYMENT,

Thank you for your letter of August 2nd. I found your supplement most interesting, and I look forward to your next month's issue.

Yours truly,
JACK BEDDINGTON.

DEAR MR RAYMENT,

Thank you very much for your letter of August 2nd, and the copy of the special supplement to the *Kinematograph Weekly* which you enclose.

I have studied it with great interest, and it seems to me to have a news and propaganda value of the highest quality. With many thanks,

Believe me, Yours very sincerely,

J. H. BEITH,
Major-General,
Director of Public Relations.

From LORD STRABOLGI,
Iddesleigh House,
Caxton Street,
Westminster, S.W.1.

DEAR SIR,

I am obliged to you for sending me a copy of your new special supplement of Propaganda and Documentary Films.

I consider this an excellent idea, and it should prove most valuable.

Yours faithfully,
STRABOLGI

*Published
every
Thursday*

Kinematograph
WEEKLY

*85 Long Acre
London, WC2*

THE CARE OF FILMS

By RUPERT LEE, of Recono Ltd. (Denham Laboratories)

"AGAINST A DISTANT background of jungle the rains fall, heavy, dull and vertical. The white man is shouldering his burden. In the palm-thatched huts it is raining. One knew this palm thatching was not water-tight."

"The white man is returning to London to marry the leading lady who hasn't changed in fifteen years. Not even her clothes. It is raining in London. The white Georgian doorway of Aunt Agatha's house is half obscured by heavy rain—but no: not in the drawing room—but yes! in Aunt Agatha's drawing room, dark, heavy, vertical rain. . . ."

The principal trouble with films is scratches and emulsion scratches are, as a rule, the first which appear. After a time, celluloid scratches will appear, and at any time perforations may tear and films may even break. Before making any suggestions as to how films may be fortified against damage, or cured when damaged, it is necessary to impress on film users the importance of projection. The projectionist should make his job an art. A large number of scratches would be saved by a more frequent cleaning of the gate. All films are not the same thickness. Where the tension is adjustable it should be used. Only sufficient tension is required to keep the film steady, and any more is dangerous. Films can be dusted oftener with advantage. Hand re-winding through a silk velvet is a safeguard against dust and dirt. If you find you are getting a persistent scratch always in one place, don't blame the laboratories for supplying films that scratch in one place. The fault may be in the *take-up box* or there may be a *burr on the gate*.

FORTIFYING NEW PRINTS

Nevertheless, however careful one is, accidents do happen and a considerable amount of thought has been given to the fortifying of films against too early damage. The idea which occurred reasonably to photographic people was to harden the emulsion. Formalin, alum, formaldehyde, and other substances, have been used, mostly combined with the fixing bath. Some of these are definitely helpful to the emulsion though they incline to affect the celluloid—especially in the case of an acetate base.

Another idea was to put a protecting coat over the emulsion. The objection to this was that it formed a sandwich of soft emulsion between the celluloid and the protective coating. There was a tendency—far too frequent—for the coating to come off, and bring the emulsion with it.

Waxing does to some extent protect a film against slight surface scratches which often, owing to the wax, become worse as there is a tendency for the emulsion surface to turn over and become ploughed in. Lubrication has been tried. Used in sufficient quantities to make the

film very dirty, it is said to be effective. Lubrication is probably not the solution. That a surface is slippery does not necessarily mean that it resists scratches. Skates will cut into ice although they slip very adroitly.

The solution lies rather in toughening the emulsion to resist the scratch. My own experiments have been towards using a toughening, on the lines of a coating, but which could be sunk deeply into the emulsion with which it became completely homogeneous. It has been found possible to achieve by this means an improved adhesion to the celluloid base, and by adding to this "impregnating" solution certain softening agents advantageous to the preservation of the flexibility of the celluloid, a double purpose is served. It is possible by proper impregnation of a film from the emulsion side, not only to fortify the picture against scratches, but also to prolong the life of the celluloid.

There is one type of film which cannot be treated in this way. Dufaycolour, owing to the colour réseau and the varnish which protects it, is vulnerable to most solutions should they penetrate these. The answer so far is to treat the celluloid from the back. This treatment has been found to improve the flexibility of new films and to improve the adhesion of the emulsion to the base.

RESTORING SCRATCHED AND OLD COPIES

The cure of emulsion scratches has largely benefited from a proper study of the possibilities of impregnation. Scratches on a film appear on the screen either as black—or less usually, as white. When the scratch shows as white it is because the emulsion has been completely gouged away. When the scratch shows black it is generally assumed to be due to a furrow in either the emulsion or the celluloid which has become filled with dirt, dust, or oil. This is not entirely true. A careful cleaning of the film will not eliminate the black scratch, the persistence of which is owing to the refraction of light on the walls of the trench. Now the nearest solution would be to fill the scratch with something—but something having the nearest refractive index to the emulsion or celluloid. There is a further consideration. The filling would have to be homogeneous with the gelatine layer and celluloid, otherwise, as I have already said in reference to coating and impregnation, there is a danger of detachment. Globe polish has been tried, with a certain mild success on slight emulsion scratches. I cannot find the refractive index of Globe polish, it is not in Molesworth, but it has been a minor success—or so I am given to understand. Coating will eliminate scratches on the emulsion,

but this is open to the same objections as I have already mentioned. The solution of the problem is to soften the emulsion sufficiently to allow the colloids used to enter into contract (sic. *not* contact) with the emulsion in such a way that the whole becomes homogeneous. The scratches disappear and the emulsion is fortified against further damage.

The treatment of celluloid has hardly received the proper attention it deserves. To dissolve the surface and press it against a glass roller certainly removes some scratches, but the result is not very astonishing, and takes no account of the quality of the material. Celluloid, like the human body, is composed of certain concomitants and water. (It is perhaps for this reason that some people suppose that a damp pad enclosed in a film canister prevents a celluloid film from becoming brittle.) But it is not the loss of water which deteriorates a celluloid film. Many other substances are lost with age, and as scratched celluloid is generally a slightly elderly celluloid, it is necessary to treat it for scratches and age as well. The question becomes, almost entirely, one of solvents: to dissolve, to soften and to leave a sufficiency of the softening agents so as to achieve a rebirth and to regenerate and recreate the celluloid base as new. Now it is well known that when metals are mixed to form alloys, the results are not an averaging out of the qualities of the elements in the mixture. A mixture of bismuth, lead, tin, and cadmium, all of which alone have a melting point of many degrees, will form a humour-giving alloy, known as Rose's metal, which melts at the temperature of a nice cup of tea. Solvents will show similar freak properties. Certain solvents mixed in certain proportions will give results that can hardly be forecast by a study of the individual characteristics of the various concomitants. It has been found possible to work out graded formulæ to suit the age and amount of damage to the celluloid. The process of restoring a celluloid film and removing the scratches is, then, to soften the film to a sufficient depth, to produce sufficient surface tension to restore the gloss, and finally to leave, unevaporated, a proportion of softening agents to assure the original elasticity and plasticity of the film.

Today it is possible to fortify a copy before it has been put into service, and often, successfully to restore it again when it has become scratched and old. The cost of either process is very small when compared with the cost of a new copy.

With proper care and handling, and correct treatment when any trouble occurs, a film can be made, not only to last longer, but to give, while in service, the clear, steady picture which enables the audience to forget the technicians.

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CORRESPONDENCE

DEAR SIR:

In your September issue there is an admirable article, *The Other Side of the Atlantic*, "by a correspondent in America." With the general criticism in the article I am in entire agreement; but there are some statements of fact which make it obvious that the writer knows intimately about films in Canada and not so completely about films in the United States.

The Lion Has Wings, with the commentary by Lowell Thomas, has received about 1,000 bookings and is continuing at the rate of about 25 per week—mainly one or two days each. It never made a "huge impression" here, but I believe it is doing a good job still. I have seen it three times lately and have been surprised to see how little of it has dated. The film has been withdrawn in half a dozen situations where the local German influence threatened trouble for the theatre showing it.

For Freedom has not been released here, so far as I know, and I doubt if it has much of a market now.

Pastor Hall has received ecstatic press notices for its New York release. It is now in its third week at a small house on Broadway. Its releases in other big cities have been fairly successful, depending apparently on the advance publicity build-up.

Neither *Convoy* nor *Contraband* have been released. *The Stars Look Down* is still held by M.G.M.: it is said that the difficult accent of one of the leading characters is causing worry. *Mein Kampf—My Crimes*, released here as *After Mein Kampf*, has had a short run on Broadway with severe criticisms from most of the press. *Madmen of Europe* has, as your correspondent writes, a vogue as a second feature. R.K.O. has recently released *Queen of Destiny* (60 *Glorious Years*) as a second feature for extensive showing. Other British features now released include *The Outsider*, *21 Days Together*, and *The Fugitive* (known in England as *On the Night of the Fire*). All the early Korda productions have been re-issued lately, and such films as *The Lady Vanishes*, the Bergner films, *Man of Aran*, *Edge of the World* and the early Hitchcock films are often to be seen in revival theatres.

The story of British shorts is pretty sad. Columbia still holds *Squadron 992*, which is likely to be released as *Floating Elephants*. *Men of the Lightship* is receiving a new sound track at the time of writing. I have not seen a single British wartime short that would be acceptable as a commercial proposition in the American film market without some alterations.* The "war psychology" of the British film audience appears to have widened the gulf between American and British film tastes, and the British find it hard to realise this trend or

the reason for it. We read the opinion of a senior London critic that *Men of the Lightship* should be shown in America immediately. Such an attempt (were it feasible or acceptable commercially) would have had the reverse influence from what was intended.

In conclusion I must express a personal disagreement with your contributor about *Foreign Correspondent*. Not only to me, but to many others who have complained bitterly, it is incredible that Wanger and Hitchcock should have devised a noble and heroic death for their fifth-column politician, followed by a justification of his way of life from his daughter. Is this what we are to expect when "Hollywood tries hard"?

Yours truly,

New York.

AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT

October 7th, 1940.

* Since this letter was written *London Can Take It* has been given the widest theatrical release ever accorded to a short in the U.S.A.—ED.

DEAR SIR:

Maybe I'm speaking for a minority among the British documentary film people, but nevertheless I ask D.N.L. to place on record my deep resentment at its support of the closing speech in Hitchcock's film *Foreign Correspondent*.

"America!" booms Joel McCrea, "Hang on to your lights, they are the only lights left in the world!"

D.N.L. is pleased to describe this off-the-cuff piece of melodramatics, based on Lord Grey's famous 1914 utterance, spoken in the film by an irresponsible American news-hound in London to a transatlantic audience, as: "It is neither a warlike nor a political piece of propaganda; it stimulates thought, and its message should strike home on the other side of the Atlantic; to us over here it does at least bring evidence of a goodwill backed by clear thinking".

I describe it as an insult to the "only army which", claims D.N.L. itself in an editorial in the same issue, "will win the war"; an army of civilians, I maintain, in whom the lights have never burned more brightly and more proudly than they do now.

The tale has gone the rounds that the words spoken by McCrea were either written or inspired by Mr. John Grierson when he was in Hollywood. If this is true (though to me they sound more like Mr. Kennedy than Mr. Grierson) they reveal a grave lack of knowledge of public opinion in Britain, a lack one does not usually associate with a propagandist so sensitive to the public pulse as Mr. Grierson.

If the Editors of D.N.L. subscribe to this message, which implies that the British people no longer have faith in democracy in their own country, and call it "evidence of goodwill backed by clear thinking", do they not place themselves, to use their own words, among "the large number of people who are out of touch not so much with fact as with feeling; who are frightened of any clear statement of true democratic principles; who, from their own safe little paradises, will delegate authority upwards but never downwards; who turn at all costs to a fictional heaven rather than a factual purgatory"?

I can assure these leaders of the British documentary film that the people who are really suffering as well as fighting this war do not share this view that the lights are even dimmed in Britain. If they did, the Fascist propagandists might well claim to have already won the war. My own belief is that if the Editors of D.N.L. had not been under the impression that the words in question had been written or inspired by Mr. John Grierson, they might not have been so quick to agree that their own, as well as other people's beliefs in democratic Britain had vanished. Assuming he is responsible, Mr. Grierson's 4,000 odd miles remove from Britain may explain his rare misjudgment of public opinion, but Film Centre Ltd. is, after all, quite close to the Front Line. In their editorial the Editors of D.N.L. neatly divide the British nation into two camps of US and THEM; I invite these leaders of the documentary group to remember that democracy in practice needs only one camp—WE.

In order that readers of D.N.L. may not think I am alone in holding this opinion, the following wish to associate their names with this letter: Michael Balcon, *Ealing Studios*; Ritchie Calder, *Daily Herald* and *New Statesman*; Cavalcanti, *Ealing Studios*; A. J. Cummings, *News Chronicle*; Aubrey Flanagan, *Motion Picture Herald*; Michael Foot, *Evening Standard*; Dilys Powell, *Sunday Times*, Alexander Werth, *Manchester Guardian*.

Yours, etc.,

PAUL ROTH

The final speech in *Foreign Correspondent*, an imaginary broadcast to the U.S.A., from London, runs:—

"I can't read the rest of the speech I had had because all the lights have gone out—so I'll have just to talk off the cuff. All that noise you hear isn't static. It's death coming to London. Yes, they're coming here now. You can hear the bombs falling on the streets and the homes. Don't tune me out. Hang on a while. This is a big story—and you're part of it. It's too late to do anything here now except stand in the dark and let them come. It's as if the lights are out everywhere—except in America. Keep those lights burning there. Cover them with steel; ring them with guns. Build a canopy of battleships and bombing 'planes around them—Hello, America! Hang on to your lights. They're the only lights left in the world!"

DOCUMENTARY AND OTHER BOOKINGS FOR DECEMBER

(The following bookings for December are selected from a list covering its Members, supplied by The News and Specialised Theatres Association.)

	Week ending		Week ending		Week ending
After Midnight The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	7th	Four Daughters Tatler Theatre, Chester	14th	Point of View No. 7 (What is Federation?) News Cinema, Aberdeen Tatler Theatre, Chester	7th
A Letter from Aldershot The News Theatre, Leeds	21st	Four Thousand Years The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	28th	Presto Changed The Tatler News Reel, Newcastle	28th
Andy Panda Goes Fishing The Tatler News Reel, Newcastle	14th	From Fin to Hand News Theatre, Birmingham News Theatre, Leeds	7th	Rocky Mountain Grandeur The Tatler News Reel, Newcastle	21st
Art Gallery The Tatler News Reel, Newcastle	21st	From Minuet to Foxtrot New Theatre, Newcastle	7th	Rural Hungary News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	21st
Atlantic Patrol News Theatre, Birmingham News Theatre, Leeds News Theatre, Manchester News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	7th 28th 7th 14th	Furnished Apartments The Tatler News Reel, Newcastle	21st	See Your Doctor News Theatre, Leeds News Theatre, Newcastle	28th 21st
Big Idea The News House, Bristol News Theatre, Manchester	14th 7th	Glimpses of New Brunswick Tatler News Reel, Newcastle	7th	Silent Wings News Theatre, Newcastle	21st
Bridge Across the Skies The Tatler Theatre, Chester	21st	Golden Boy Tatler News Theatre, Leeds	21st	Sink or Swim News Theatre, Manchester	14th
Carry on Children News Cinema, Aberdeen News Theatre, Newcastle The Tatler Theatre, Manchester	21st 28th 7th	Happy Families The News Cinema, Aberdeen	28th	Ski-ing Technique News Cinema, Aberdeen	28th
Cartoons News Theatre, Birmingham News Theatre, Birmingham Tatler News Theatre, Birmingham News House, Bristol News House, Bristol News Theatre, Manchester News Theatre, Manchester	21st 28th 21st 28th 21st 28th	Hollywood Hobbies News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	14th	Stage by Stage News Theatre, Leeds Tatler Theatre, Manchester	21st 28th
Charge of the Light Brigade Tatler News Theatre, Leeds Tatler News Theatre, Leeds	7th 14th	Human Fish News Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne	21st	Stranger than Fiction No. 78 The Tatler News Reel, Newcastle	21st
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ORGANISING A SCIENTIFIC FILM CLUB

DR. EHRLICH'S MAGIC BULLET

By NAN L. CLOW, B.Sc., M.A.

A composite review by two scientific observers, reprinted by courtesy of
The Scientific Worker (abridged)

Reprinted by courtesy of *The Scientific Worker*

TWELVE months ago the Aberdeen Branch of the A.S.W. decided to try a film show as an item of its winter activities and ended by having a vigorous film club with 130 members, which, in addition to its instructional and entertainment value, has formed a valuable liaison between the A.S.W. and other local organisations. As a guide to other branches which might desire to establish such film clubs and have already been making enquiries, the following is a brief account of the evolution of the Aberdeen Scientific Film Club.

The desirability for the formation of a club, as opposed to the holding of random film shows, is closely connected with the fact that a club which exists for the display of educational and scientific films is not subject to entertainment tax, even though the Customs and Excise have to be notified of each show and the programme submitted before exemption is given. Having decided to form a club, the next question is where to meet. This will depend entirely on local conditions, but it should not be difficult to find, where there is a University or Technical College, a Physics or other department equipped with 16mm. talkie projector, etc. The cost of the hall and the use of the equipment will vary from a nominal charge to cover wear and tear and a gratuity to the operator, to a definite payment for hire.

To bring the activities of the Club before the public, contact was made with the local W.E.A., who undertook to make a part of their syllabus available to the S.F.C., in addition to posting 500 of the Club's own leaflets along with their syllabus of lectures. A further batch of leaflets went to the local Film Society and a Press notice capped the advertising campaign.

The offers held out by the S.F.C. leaflets were membership of the club at 4s. 6d. for five shows, which were to be held about the time of the full moon—a fact which made quite a number of members venture forth in the black-out.

The season's programme was so designed that more than one aspect of a subject was explored from show to show by different films. Thus a physiological series considered in turn, nutrition, vitamins, functions of the body, and this emerged into a sociological series which considered housing problems, vermin, smoke abatement, etc. In connection with some of the more highly specialised films, demonstrations were given, as when a demonstration of chemical analysis on the macro scale preceded a film on micro-chemical technique, thus enabling non-chemists to anticipate and appreciate the points illustrated.

Further, in order to give something more than can be expected in the ordinary cinema, the makers of some of the films shown were invited to come and supplement the material given in their films.

The basis of this film is the life of the bacteriologist, Paul Ehrlich (1854–1915). The following is a factual criticism only, not one of technique or acting, of which it can simply be said that nothing seems inappropriate or ungentle. One admires the restraint shown by the use of orthodox apparatus in the normal manner.

The film covers the whole of Ehrlich's scientific career, commencing with his clinical post in Berlin, in a manner which is broadly true but in many ways inaccurate. There is a great connecting theme running through Ehrlich's work—that of the combination of substances with different parts of living organisms—and this is illustrated in the film, beginning with the specific combination of dyestuffs with micro-organisms in order to render them visible under the microscope. But this idea was not entirely Ehrlich's, and it seems unnecessary that Ehrlich should be made to explain such staining to Koch on the occasion of Koch's announcement of the discovery of the tubercle bacillus (1882), when Koch had used the method at least five years earlier for the anthrax bacillus. Again, at other points, the main errors occur in attributing too much to Ehrlich and in over-dramatising incidents of his life, e.g. in the use of diphtheria antitoxin, and in the '606 trial.'

Even with such criticism of details, it is excellent that a popular film should be made which shows so much of the genuine difficulties and triumphs of scientific work. It shows that much of Ehrlich's research was on problems of im-

mediate practical importance—the standardisation of diphtheria antitoxin, the development of salvarsan for cure of syphilis—and that others, apparently abstract, contributed to practical as well as theoretical advances. The difficulties of getting adequate financial backing for research are shown many times. Though science had in Germany at this time attained an official recognition which was achieved only later in England, this involved restrictions with which Ehrlich and Koch are shown in conflict.

Many points are raised of a general nature which are only too topical to-day; fortunately the audience is led to side against such futile obstructions as racial prejudice, inadequate financing, prevention of scientific workers from attending important lectures, etc. Conventional taboos are satirised in an amusing sequence where the mention of syphilis at a dinner table causes violent reaction.

The points about Ehrlich's personality which have been noted by his biographers are also well interpreted by Edward G. Robinson: his tendency to advance a theory on little evidence, and then to defend it impetuously, and the impression which the film gives of rapid and great discovery in bacteriology during Ehrlich's life is true and can hardly be over emphasised.

A few excellent microscope slides in colour were incorporated in the film; the exemplary views of the tubercle bacilli, spirochaetes, and particularly the living trypanosomes would in themselves make a viewing worth while.

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